

# Believing In Achieving

SHERATON FOUR SEASONS | KOURY CONVENTION CENTER | GREENSBORO, NC



## Strategies for Facilitating Spontaneous Communication with Students diagnosed with Autism

Presented by

Vicky Poston Roy, PhD, CCC-SLP and

Amy Cameron, M.S., CCC-SLP

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## Objectives

- Participants will:
  - Recognize the importance of their own communication use and the impact of their communication on the communication of their students
  - Better understand the process that leads to prompt dependency in nonverbal, low verbal, and “response only” verbal students
  - Learn three specific strategies to facilitate spontaneous, independent contributions during reciprocal communication with their students



## Roles within Reciprocal Communication

- **Active Listening**

Focusing attention, reading context, matching to previous experience, understanding perspective of Speaker

**Intent of Listener- listening to understand not just reply**

- **Active Speaking**

Idea generation, message formulation, articulation, central coherence, monitoring listener, clarifying and repair of communication breakdown

**Intent of Speaker- exchange of thoughts, observations and ideas**

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## Communicative Intent

- The purpose or meaning behind why people are communicating with others
- The “why” behind communication
- People with Special Needs, especially Autism Spectrum Disorders may have limited communicative intent

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## Communicative Intent in Children with Special Needs

- Is impacted by the disability, especially in the case of autism
- In the case of autism, the vast majority of communication from the child is to have needs/wants met
- The vast majority of what is SAID to these same children is in an attempt to **get** the child to respond, not allow the child to generate their own input
- Children with disabilities may use “behaviors” to communicate, we need to actively listen to the behaviors and scaffold

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## Why?

As a Speaker, we expect and rely on feedback from our Listener. So much so that when we do not receive it, we will “make it easier” for the child by using Questions, Commands and Prompts.



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## What is the Goal?

### Thoughtful, reciprocal communication.

### Why?

Cognition and communication are closely tied  
and we have higher hopes for all kids, etc



## Recognize Your Intent

- Keep the goal in mind,
- become aware that what you say is influencing the brain and
- it is going to be especially hard when you receive little feedback
- Declarative vs Imperative
- Getting something vs creating opportunity
- Directing vs Communicating/Collaborating



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## Directive Communication

- Questions with definite answers
- Commands with actions that can be deemed “right or wrong”
- Prompts or fill in the blank statements
- All require minimal thought and input from the Listener
- All have the intent of GETTING the child to respond

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## Experience Sharing Communication

- Early communication functions that are non-directive are things like:
  - -making actual choices
  - -expressing opinions
  - -calling for attention
  - -Noticing things
  - -commenting



## Take an assessment of YOUR communication

- What is the child doing?
- What are YOU doing
- How is your language impacting the child's opportunity to grow as a reciprocal communicator

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## Systematic Opportunities

- Must have systematic opportunities for STUDENTS to make progress as thinkers
- How to think vs How to know

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## Strategy #1

- Identify a time frame or a specific activity where you will practice creating thinking and sharing opportunities for your students
- What percentage of the child's day can be devoted to thinking opportunities?



## Strategy #2

- During your specified time period, reduce your questions to less than 20% (1/2? Less than 5?).
- By asking a question, you **ONLY** provide an opportunity for your students to **RESPOND**.
- Comment, think out loud, invite, notice, share, expand, make real decisions



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## Strategy #3

- STOP TALKING!
- Give your students time to think, organize themselves and make a contribution.
- Pause for a minimum of 5 seconds before scaffolding, repeating, or rephrasing.
- Use the “anticipatory gaze”



# Thank You!

Vicky Poston Roy, PhD, CCC-SLP  
Interactive Communication, LLC  
Baton Rouge LA, 70809

[www.interactivecommunicationbr.com](http://www.interactivecommunicationbr.com)

[vposton22@gmail.com](mailto:vposton22@gmail.com)

Amy Cameron, MS, CCC-SLP  
Pathways Treatment Center  
Apex, NC

[www.pathwaystreatmentcenter.org](http://www.pathwaystreatmentcenter.org)

[AECameron@aol.com](mailto:AECameron@aol.com)